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AMITY BAPTIST CHURCH:
THE NATURAL HISTORY OF
A CHURCH AS AN URBAN
INSTITUTION

A THESIS
SUBMITTED TO THE FACULTY OF ATLANTA UNIVERSITY
IN PARTIAL FULFILLMENT OF THE REQUIREMENTS FOR
THE DEGREE OF MASTER OF ARTS

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ATLANTA, GEORGIA

AUGUST 1951

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CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

The Problem. Amity Baptist Church is one of the older and more prominent of the churches that serve the Atlanta Negro community. Amity emerged as an amorphous organization during the Emancipation period (1863). The church was originally composed of twenty house slaves, five farm slaves, and a free Negro who came to Atlanta from Richmond, Virginia. This free Negro played the roles of agitator, leader, and minister. During this period the slaves worshipped in the same church of their masters.¹

After the Civil War these slaves became freedmen, and with their leader they formed their own religious organization which they called Amity Baptist Church. For their first physical plant the members of Amity used a box car which was sent to them by Northern missionaries. The box car was their first independent place of worship. It, also, served as a school during the weekdays. The school was organized by white missionaries who came South with the Union Army to aid the Negro in his problem of adjusting to the new conditions of freedom.²

Amity's membership grew, and the school grew in attendance. Because of the freedmen's desire for a church in keeping with

¹Cf., Gunnar Myrdal, An American Dilemma (New York, 1944), p. 589.

²Ibid., p. 860.

their newly acquired economic status, as well as the growing membership which the box car could not contain, they moved the church to the westside of Atlanta. On the westside, the members of Amity Baptist Church experienced the same overcrowding which they had encountered at the box car site. This overcrowding came as a result of a wave of conversion to Christianity by the Negroes in the South.³ Amity moved again: this time two blocks away from its second site. The church has remained at this latter location for seventy-nine years.

During the box car and first westside locations, social differentiation was in process among the members of Amity. After freedom, the house slaves became the domestic servants; the slave artisan became the free artisan; and the farm slave became the urban laborer. These three groups composed the membership of Amity. Thus, social mobility was apparent in Amity. Where the domestic servants had wished for the habits, manners, and tastes of their masters; the artisan likewise had wished for the houses, buggies, and clothes of their masters.⁴

The artisan of Amity was able to send his children to private Negro schools in Atlanta; when Amity moved to its last location, the westside, the children of the artisans had become professional people. These professional people or the

³Ibid.

⁴Cf., E. Franklin Frazier, The Negro in The United States (New York, 1949), pp. 273-276.

second generation continued to attend Amity. The second generation in order to enhance their socio-economic status sent their children to Atlanta colleges and Northern universities.⁵

From Emancipation to the present, by conscious or unconscious emphasis on education and socio-economic positions, Amity has become a church for college presidents, professors, doctors, lawyers, dentists, school supervisors, public school teachers, bankers and business men.⁶

At the present time Amity does not have the same meaning for the professionals as their forefathers. To their forefathers Amity was a sacred place; it was a social center; it was a place where spiritual benefits were derived. Going to Amity meant dressing in one's best clothes, forgetting about work, having the chance to acquit oneself with credit before one's fellows, and having the opportunity of meeting, talking, and laughing with friends. Going to Amity also was an outlet for religious emotions.

The problem is to describe and explain the evolutionary process marking the growth and development of Amity Baptist Church. More concretely, the task is to test the validity of certain tentative propositions that there are preceptible stages in the development of the church, the emerging Negro community in Atlanta, and the emerging educational and socio-economic statuses of its members.

⁵This statement is taken from an interview with Mrs. W., Atlanta, January 24, 1951.

⁶Amity Church Bulletin (Atlanta, 1945), p. 28.

The study will be guided and controlled by two propositions: The first proposition is that the different physical locations of the church give important clues to the changes in the church. The second proposition is that the church has attempted to adapt itself through modification of its structure and functions, to the growth of Atlanta and the Negro community; this is reflected in its growth and changing educational and socio-economic statuses of its membership. These changing conditions may be conveniently conceived in terms of the following perceptible stages:

- (1) Unrest and Differentiation from Parent Body: The "Walton" Stage, 1860 to 1866.
- (2) Formal Organization and Independence: The "Box Car Stage", 1866 to 1869.
- (3) Expansion and Relocation: The First Westside Stage, 1870 to 1872.
- (4) Early Balance and Adjustment: The Second Westside Stage, 1872 to 1900.
- (5) Late Balance and Adjustment: 1901 to 1928.
- (6) Beginning of Maladjustment and Rational Attempts to Meet Recurrent Crises: 1929 to 1950.

Data. For this study data have been gathered from (1) historical documents: published church histories, membership files, records (conference minutes), and official letters; (2) interviews with members and officers of the church; (3) material on the Atlanta community gathered from old settlers of the community and published sources; and (4) participant observation.

The historical documents were: (1) Amity Baptist Church, Church publications, 1932, 1942, and 1945; (2) James Cooke's two books, The Black Side (1894) and Our Pulpit Illustrated (1898); (3) Paul H. Douglass, Christian Reconstruction in The South in which W. E. B. DuBois has a chapter that deals with the Negro church in Atlanta prior to 1900; (4) Frazier and Myrdal's books, The Negro in The United States, and An American Dilemma.

The published sources used to gather material on the Atlanta community were: W. G. Cooper, Official History of Fulton County, (2) Wallace P. Reed, City of Atlanta, Georgia, (3) Paul W. Miller, Atlanta, (4) and the books of James Cooke which have been mentioned.

Membership files which were used date back to 1940. The records (conference minutes) date back to 1923.

After the data were collected, they were classified and filed under the following categories: (1) Basic data, (2) Community setting, (3) Social Organization, (4) Social change, (5) Critical situations, (6) and Conflict.

The key informants were the following persons:

(1) Mr. G. was born in 1860, he is 91 years old. He was born into Amity Baptist Church. His mother was one of the founders of Amity. Mr. G. attended the school which was held in Amity's box car. He was a graduate of Atlanta University. For eighteen years he was a church clerk of Amity. He served on the deacon board for thirty years. He considers himself as one of the "pillars of Amity". He is now a retired brickmason, he lives with his daughter and son-in-law.

(2) Mr. C. was born in 1863, he is 88 years old. Like Mr. G., he was born into Amity, and his mother was one of the founders. Mr. C. also was church clerk, he served for fifteen

years. Mr. C. was a clerk in a dry-goods wholesale house in downtown Atlanta, until 1902 when he left that job to become a railway postal clerk. He lives in retirement with his son who is a high school teacher.

(3) Mrs. W. was born in 1863, she is 88 years old. Her father was one of the founders of Amity. She is a graduate of one of the Atlanta colleges. Before retirement she was a registered nurse. She has been active in numerous church organizations.

(4) Dr. A. was born in Macon, Georgia in 1867, he is 84 years old. He came to Atlanta in 1877 with his parents. After graduating from an Atlanta college, he went away to medical school, and then he returned to Atlanta to practice medicine. In 1893 he became a member of Amity. Although he has retired from his profession, Dr. A. is still active with the boy scout troop of the church.

(5) Mr. K. was born in 1891, he is 60 years old. He was born into Amity. He was a graduate of one of the Atlanta colleges. He is a retired assistant manager of an Atlanta Negro insurance company. Mr. K. has served on the trustee and deacon boards of Amity.

(6) Mrs. D. was born in 1900, she is 51 years old. She is the daughter of the second pastor of Amity. She is a graduate of one of the Atlanta colleges. She is a housewife; her husband is a teacher at one of the Atlanta high schools.

Methodology. The writer's interest in this study was stimulated by a casual remark made by a young member of the church:

They want to move the church from out of the neighborhood, but they don't have the money. They want to move it because the neighborhood is not the right place for the church because no one attends the church from the neighborhood.

This remark suggested that the institution is currently not well adapted to its present setting. The writer wondered if this were true; and if it were, why? This led one to speculate that there was a period when it was better adapted. It also raised questions regarding the criteria to be used in

studying the evolution and development of a church as an institution.

In seeking a conceptual guide which would be useful in answering some of these questions, the investigator decided that the most fruitful would be one of a natural history approach as described by Dawson and Gettys in their, An Introduction to Sociology:⁷

Natural history undertakes to investigate and record all pertinent facts about type phenomena, to describe in conceptual terms the processes by which these phenomena take place, to analyze the mechanisms operative in the changing character of the phenomena, and to furnish valid explanations of the events.

In other words, as R. E. Park says in the "Introduction" to L. P. Edwards, Natural History of Revolution: "natural history, in fact is nothing more nor less than an account of an evolutionary process".⁸ In addition to the conceptual guide of natural history, the investigator decided that E. C. Hughes, The Growth of An Institution⁹ which is an intensive study of the Chicago Real Estate Board and his monograph, "Institutions"¹⁰

⁷Dawson and Gettys, An Introduction to Sociology (rev. ed.: New York, 1948), p. 689.

⁸R. E. Park, in "Introduction" to L. P. Edwards, The Natural History of Revolution. (Chicago, 1927) p. xi.

⁹E. C. Hughes, The Growth of An Institution, (Chicago, 1931).

¹⁰E. C. Hughes, "Institutions", New Outline of The Principles of Sociology, ed. Alfred McClung Lee. (New York, 1946), pp. 225-267.

would also be helpful. Edgar L. Heermance has this to say about Hughes' The Growth of An Institution:

The trade association movement supplies a unique laboratory for the social scientist. In the functional group, common attitudes, and standards have been crystallizing and reforming. This development has been contemporary, thus, lending itself to an inductive study of social processes. The sample selected by the author, the Chicago Real Estate Board, has had a continuous existence since 1883. In tracing the history of the organization and its policies, minutes of meetings and official publications were supplemented by personal interviews. The author's chief interest lies in the growth of a typical institution, with a tradition, a code, and a fairly well-developed social control.

In this study, chief reliance was placed on the interview. Participant observation was used to accumulate additional data and to supplement that gathered from interviews. Interviewing was important because church records were fragmentary and incomplete.

The interviewees were selected on the basis of length of their membership in Amity. The ages of these informants ranged from ninety-one to twenty-eight years. The investigator was not acquainted with these persons, but with the help of the minister of Amity and a former professor, who knew these persons, contacts were facilitated.

Before beginning the interviews, all available information bearing on the problem to be studied was collected. Tentative hypotheses were set up. The names, addresses, occupations or professions, and other information on the personal lives of the informants were accumulated. In most cases these were

business and professional persons.

Most of the interviews took place in homes. On each occasion the interview always began with a brief greeting and personal introduction. Then, it was explained to the interviewee that a study of Amity Baptist Church was in process. Each interviewee was impressed by the fact that the information given was important. Each interviewee was willing to supply the information which was sought by the investigator.

Establishing rapport was not a major problem. The investigator knew some of the members of Amity, and he had obtained information concerning the Atlanta Negro Community from books and personal experience from being a member of the community for four years. The interviewee and the investigator were able to talk about Amity and its members and the community which aided the establishment of rapport. There was no question about note taking. The majority of these informants had been interviewed before, and they had no feelings about notes being taken.

At the end of the first interview the investigator would make arrangements with the informant for a follow up interview. This procedure followed the suggestion made by Pauline Young:¹¹

¹¹ Pauline Young, Scientific Social Surveys and Research, (New York, 1949), p. 195.

A second or third interview may be necessary. In that case best results will be secured if the first interview breaks off at a time when the interviewee is still fresh, still has something important to say and himself prepares for another interview.

After each interview all notes were recorded. In most cases the old records and documents served as checks upon the data, and aided in the organization of data.

For approximately one year, the investigator was a participant or member of one of the youth organizations of Amity, and participated in the regular church services, public forums, and church-sponsored activity. The minister of Amity, a deacon of Amity who is a business man, and the investigator became friends during the investigation. Friendly visits were made to the homes of the minister and the business man by the investigator. The conversations were focused on Amity and the Atlanta community.

Concerning the participant-observer method used in The Growth of An Institution, Heermance comments:

More use might be used of what Lindeman calls the "Participant Observer". The social group bound together by common interests and reacting to common problems, need to be studied from within rather than from without with critical objectivity.

For a month the investigator frequented the "cheap cafes" in the neighborhood of Amity, talking with the customers and owners of these cafes. Significant and penetrating insights, concerning the people of the neighborhood, were obtained through this technique. Pauline Young says¹² this about participant

¹²Ibid., p. 203.

observation:

It (participant observation) often tends to accustom the group to the observer and at times even to accept him and incorporate him more or less as a member. He, thus, gains the rapprochement which is indispensable for more intimate case studies and interviews later on.

The study will be presented under the headings of the stages already mentioned. Amity Baptist Church as an urban institution will be examined from the point of view of an institution in process which will include functionaries (ministers), members, and statuses and roles of these members. Also, in each stage, consideration will be given to the development of the Atlanta Negro Community.

CHAPTER II

Unrest and Differentiation from Parent Body: The "Walton" Stage, 1850-1866.

As has been stated in the previous chapter, Amity Baptist Church as an urban institution is being approached through an attempt to understand the stages of its development. This chapter is concerned with the first stage: Unrest and Differentiation from Parent Body. This stage is characterized by:

(1) The Negro and white membership of the First Baptist Church of Atlanta, (2) the peculiar status which the house servant defined for himself in the social organization that was dominated by the slave system, (3) the appearance of a Negro leader who crystallized the wishes of the house servants for a religious organization of their own, and (4) the unrest of the Negro house servants of the First Baptist Church.

The foregoing marks the emergence of the amorphous structure of Amity Baptist Church as an urban institution.

White and Negro Membership. In Atlanta between 1855 and 1864 at the corner of Walton and Forsyth Streets stood the First Baptist Church; it was a church of white merchants, owners of the foundries, planters, and their families who numbered 105.¹ However, twenty-five slaves constituted the Negro membership of this church. Twenty of these slaves were house servants and mulattoes; they were brought from rural areas of Georgia to perform the occupations of valets, butlers, cooks, drivers of carriages, and miscellaneous services. The other

¹This statement was taken from old church documents (March, 1863) of the First Baptist Church which Mr. G. has in his possession.

five slaves were farm laborers from the plantations located on the edge of Atlanta.²

During this period the general plan of Atlanta was as follows; (See Figure I) there were four roads, (1) Peachtree, coming in from Peachtree Creek, (2) Marietta, coming in from the town of Marietta, (3) Whitehall came in from a house which stood at its end in West End, and (4) Decatur coming in from the town of Decatur. These roads met at a junction called "cross roads". Today cross roads is known as Five Points.³

There were four three-story buildings erected on Whitehall and Peachtree Streets. There were wooden two-story buildings erected on Decatur Road. These buildings were commercial establishments.⁴

The residential section, prior to the Civil War, was on both sides of Marietta Road. The residential section started about a half mile above cross roads on Peachtree and extended about a mile northward. The houses on Peachtree were of brick and stone. On Whitehall Street the residential section extended about a mile westward. Some of these houses were of brick and some were of wood. On Decatur Road there were residences which were between the commercial establishments. The

²Interview with Mr. G., Atlanta, January 19, 1951.

³Paul W. Miller, Atlanta (New York, 1949), pp. 8-42.

⁴Ibid.

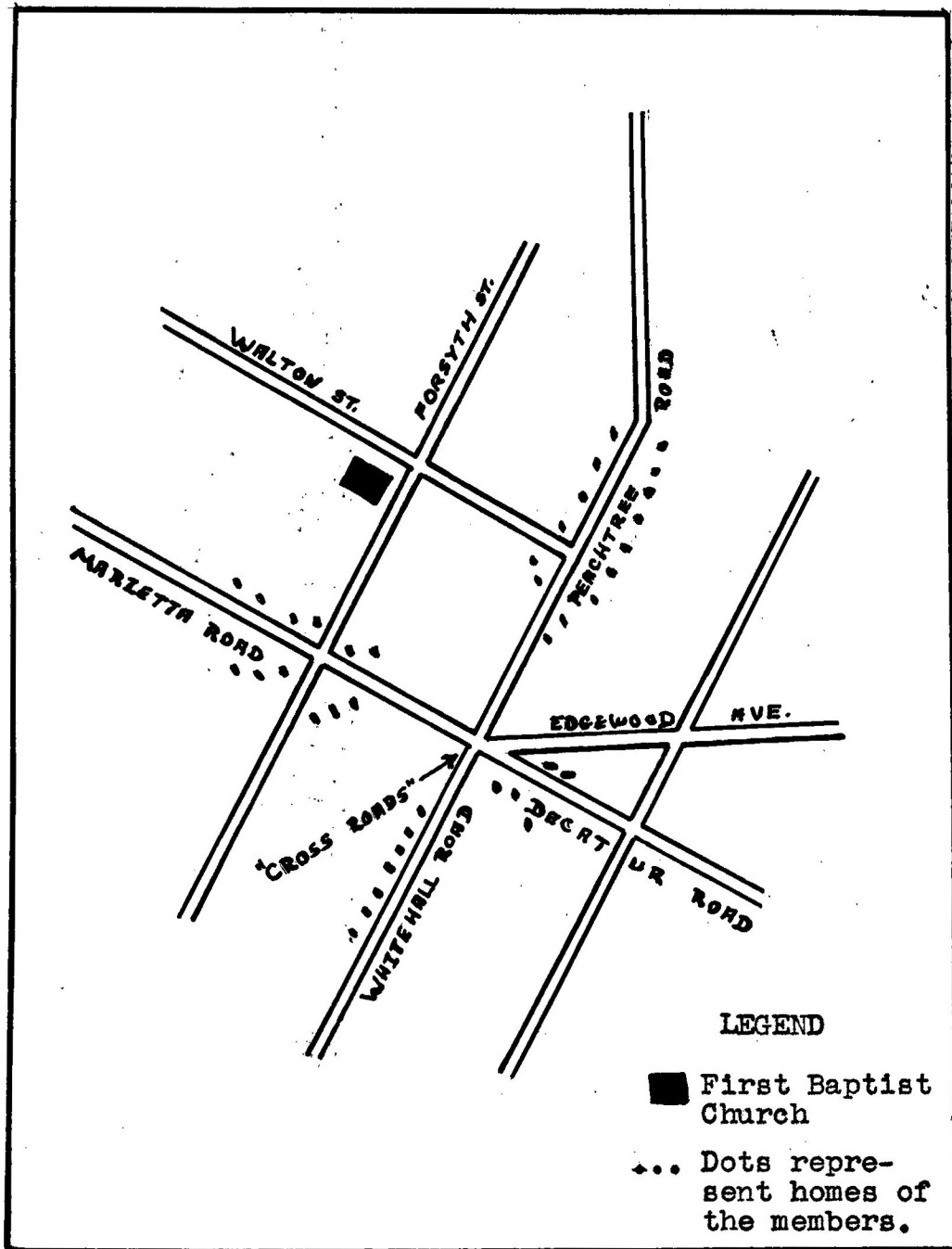


Figure 1. The Distribution of The Membership of The First Baptist Church: 1860-1863.

houses in other parts of the city were for the most part, frame cottages, and log cabins.⁵

The city had a radius of one and three-fourths miles. The center was the site of the Union Station. The white and Negro membership of the First Baptist Church, except the five farm laborers, came from Peachtree, Marietta, and Whitehall Roads. Most of these residences were within walking distances of the church. However, many of the members came in carriages and brought their house servants with them.⁶

Status of House Servant. The mixed membership of Amity was previously mentioned; this membership constituted the group of masters and slaves. This group was stratified into master and slave statuses, and this social stratification appeared in the religious life as well as in other aspects of life. The masters' roles were of superordination and the slaves' roles were of subordination.

On the other hand the house servants had a strong feeling of being superior to the farm laborers. Mrs. W., an eighty-eight year old member of Amity recalls this:⁷

I don't remember anything of the First Baptist Church because I was a little girl in 1866. But my father use to tell me that he was a barber and person-

⁵Ibid.

⁶Interview with Mr. C., Atlanta, January 23, 1951.

⁷Interview with Mrs. W., Atlanta, March 20, 1951.

al servant of Mr. D. who owned a foundry. My father said that the house servants of First Baptist Church use to take personal pride in being different from the field slaves who use to work in the fields around Marietta and Decatur.

The superior position of this group was often associated with a lighter skin complexion. But more important the superior status and prestige of the house servants were not due to imaginations, but, in fact were based on their interaction with the masters-as personal servants, and the contact with their masters while living in the same household; they were able to assimilate the ideals and sentiments of their masters as well as their external forms of behavior. The function of the house servants played an important role because some of their duties required them to wait on tables. Waiting on tables provided them with the opportunities of listening to conversations of their masters. From these conversations the house servants learned many things which the farm laborers were completely ignorant about.⁸

Frazier brings out the same point when commenting about the social distinctions among the slaves:⁹

Among the house slaves and personal servants themselves, there were distinctions in rank. Those who had a responsible position in the household and enjoyed the social status accorded the more responsible

⁸Cf., E. Franklin Frazier, The Negro in The United States (New York, 1949), pp. 273-276.

⁹Ibid., p. 274.

house servants, they had a social rank above that of the field hands. These skilled artisans, who had achieved their position because of their superior intelligence, developed a pride in their workmanship.

The house servants of the First Baptist Church identified themselves with the wishes of their masters. Their masters wished for economic success. Knowing that economic as well as educational success could not come to them, the house servants sublimated their wishes in going to church, singing hymns, and imitating their masters.¹⁰

To the members of the First Baptist Church, God was a stern father, and he was not to be provoked by committing immoral deeds or acts.¹¹ Immoral deeds or acts to the minister and membership of the First Baptist Church was being absent from public worship, attending balls, dancing, and failure to pay "just debts". If a member committed one of these acts, careful inquiry was made by a committee, and sometimes upon the findings of the committee the member or members would be expelled. Being absent from public worship was the only act which applied to the Negro.¹²

Role of Robert Williams. In 1852 Robert Williams, a Negro came to Atlanta from Richmond, Virginia where he had bought his freedom. Robert Williams was a self-educated man,

¹⁰Interview with Mr. C., Atlanta, March 5, 1951.

¹¹Mr. G., op. cit.

¹²Ibid.

and had aspirations to be a minister. The year Williams came to Atlanta he became a member of the First Baptist Church. The white minister soon gave him the responsibility of serving the spiritual needs of the Negro members.¹³

Robert Williams brought with him the news of free Negro churches in the North. Williams aroused the hopes of the slaves in the First Baptist Church; he turned their minds "to a hope for a better day". The slave status consciousness became fluid and flowed into race consciousness.

Williams was a "stranger" from the outside world who told the Negroes about the advancements of the members of their "race" north of the Mason-Dixon line.

Williams' status imposed upon him the role of the accommodative leader. He kept to the subjects of God and the other world. He functioned in a master-slave situation. This situation called for quiet agitation. Williams was a type of agitator which Blumer describes as "calm, quiet, and dignified".¹⁴

Mr. G., A ninety-one year old member of Amity remembers his mother saying this:¹⁵

When Brother Williams told us that there was such a thing as a church where Negroes worshipped in a city, we didn't believe our ears. Of course

¹³Amity Church Bulletin (Atlanta), 1945, P. 4.

¹⁴See Herbert Blumer, "Collective Behavior", New Outline of The Principles of Sociology, ed. Alfred McLung Lee. (New York, 1946, pp. 202-204.

¹⁵Mr. G., op. cit., May 20, 1951.

we knew on the plantations that the slaves held worship in cabins by themselves with a white man watching over them. But we could n't dream of a Negro having a church in town all by himself to worship in.

For the first time the Negro members of the First Baptist Church had a leader who had risen above the slave status. They admired Williams who was running the risk of detection and punishment by teaching Negroes to read and write on the plantations. Also, at church services they saw the way their masters treated Williams with respect .

Growing Unrest. Dawson and Gettys describe the mechanisms of social unrest which precede a social movement as the restless behavior of individuals and agitation. They point out that restlessness tends to spread and become social; attention wanders and fixes itself on an individual, or line of action. At this stage there is no organization except in the most rudimentary sense. There is no discipline; merely a loose association of individuals whose action pattern is being set up by means of their interaction with their leader.

The differentiation from the parent body stage was marked by a growing unrest of the house servants of the First Baptist Church for a religious organization of their own. Williams, being a Negro, sensed the attitudes and values of his followers and gave them a newer conceptions of themselves.

This growing unrest is reflected in statements by Mr. G.,

who was quoted as saying:¹⁷

We were organized in 1863. But the white man did not consider us organized. We could not get a charter to prove that we were organized, because the Civil War was not over and the white man did not consider us as being free. But we considered ourselves as being free.

With Robert Williams the house servants approached their masters and the minister with the idea for a separate church; at first the masters and the minister refused to grant their request for a separate organization. Later, however, the whites cooperated. They permitted Williams to preach occasionally on Sunday afternoons to the twenty-five Negro members. An eighty-eight year old member of Amity said this about the period:¹⁸

The white man preached the whole business. Occasionally the white minister tried Brother Williams out, and found that Brother Williams could hold his place. The white members of the First Baptist Church felt that Brother Williams could hold his place. Brother Williams preached "Jonah and The Whale" and "Christ Crucified".

In 1863 the white members, compelled by the Emancipation, encouraged the slaves to form their first religious organization. The slaves selected Williams as their unordained minister. From Emancipation to the "Seige of Atlanta" they held their religious services between the morning and night ser-

¹⁷Mr. G., op., cit.

¹⁸Mr. C., op., cit.

vices of their masters.

The religious gain of these slaves were expressed in their services. When they were a segment of the membership of the First Baptist Church their religious behavior was "constrained" by their low statuses and accommodating roles. Alone, on Sunday afternoons their services became expressionistic.¹⁹

In the differentiation from parent body stage, the house servants developed status consciousness because of their close associations with their masters. The house servants did not wish for educational and economic advantages of their masters; they realized that these advantages were denied them. Their roles only allowed them to protest about the religious organization of the First Baptist Church. Their masters did not consider this protest as a threat against the system of slavery; they realized that religion was an ideal channel for the slaves to express themselves collectively.

Collective religious action did not only pertain to this small group of Negroes in Atlanta, but it was a reflection of the collective action of Negroes in the other parts of the United States before the Civil War.

E. Franklin Frazier says:²⁰

¹⁹This statement is based on an interview with Mr. C., Atlanta, March 5, 1951.

²⁰E. Franklin Frazier, op., cit.

Among the slaves in the South there was little chance for collective action. There was no social movement. At times there were attempts at insurrection, but these attempts were blocked by slave holders. Nevertheless, the Negro did participate in religious life. Religion was one of the elements which contributed to a "state of mind" of the Negro.

CHAPTER III

Formal Organization and Independence: The "Box Car" Stage, 1866 to 1869.

The second stage, in the natural history of Amity as an urban institution, is that of Formal Organization and Independence. Accordingly, this chapter will be concerned with this stage which is characterized by:

(1) The destruction of the First Baptist Church during the "Seige of Atlanta", (2) the establishment of Amity Baptist Church as an independent place of worship by the Negro members of the First Baptist Church, (3) the physical setting and characteristics of the area where the box car of Amity was located, (4) the social structure of Amity, (5) the social role of Robert Williams, who had internalized the rights and duties of the "office of the ministry", (6) the beginning of a Negro institution of higher learning, parallel to Amity, (7) territorial mobility of the artisan, and (8) the relocation of Amity.

Destruction of The First Baptist Church. The location of Atlanta was of vital importance to the Confederacy as a center of manufacture and storage of supplies,¹ and as an army medical and hospitalization base. In an around the city several battles were fought between the Confederate and Union Armies. The most notable of which was the Battle of Atlanta, July 22, 1864. This battle was the Forty-Day Seige of the city by the Union Forces under General Sherman. The city was

¹See Gist and Halbert's discussion of the "Location of Cities" in which they discuss the "Break in Transportation Theory". Urban Society (New York, 1948), pp. 63-64. (See also Paul W. Miller, Atlanta, New York, 1949, p. 52.)

bombarded with shot and shells during the seige. On August 31, 1864 lines of communication with the outside world were broken. General Hood evacuated the city and Sherman entered it on September 2, 1864. Sherman had the civilian population evacuated and destroyed by fire almost all of Atlanta.²

During the first days of the seige a piece of round shot toppled the belfry off the First Baptist Church. The members tried to repair it, but shells drove them back to their homes. Toward the end of the seige the First Baptist Church had been reduced almost to rubble. And when the civilians evacuated the city, the members of the church left also. Robert Williams took the Negro membership with him, and they fled to Macon.³

First Independent Place of Worship. After the Seige of Atlanta was lifted the old citizens began returning. Many others came who were ruined by war and were determined to seek homes and begin life afresh. In 1866 it was ascertained through a census that Atlanta, despite losses of war, had gained and passed the highest figure of its population prior to the confederate evacuation, and that it had a population of 20,228 people. The city limits were extended by the legislature of that year to three miles in diameter in every direction.⁴

²Paul W. Miller, Ibid., pp. 16-23.

³Amity Church Bulletin (Atlanta, 1945), p. 4

⁴Paul W. Miller, op. cit., p. 24.

On the old sites of the commercial buildings which were destroyed by Sherman, new buildings were being built. In widely separated districts, groups of houses were unscratched by the flames that reduced most of the city to ashes. Shanties were built; brick and boards salvaged from the ruins. Many of the homes were makeshift: discarded army tents, old box cars, and in some cases, scraps of old tin roofing nailed to wooden framework. Some of the people boarded in the remaining private homes until they could erect more comfortable shelters.⁵

The above suggests the conditions that existed in the city of Atlanta to which Robert Williams and the Negro members of the First Baptist Church returned. Williams and his members discovered that the white membership of the First Baptist Church was holding services in a private home. They attempted to be readmitted to the membership, but their attempts were in vain. They were free Negroes. However, the white minister formed a presbytery and ordained Robert Williams. Brother Williams had become to his followers Reverend Robert Williams.⁶

For a while Robert Williams and his followers met in a store. During this period after the Civil War, white and Negro missionaries were aiding religious Negro leaders of the

⁵Ibid., pp. 22-23.

⁶Amity Church Bulletin (Atlanta, 1932), p. 6.

South. At the request of Reverend Willians the missionaries in Cincinnati, Ohio sent a box-car to Atlanta. This box car was the first independent place of worship for the group.⁷

Physical Setting and Characteristics. The box car was located on a rail siding of the Western and Atlantic Railroad. The location of the box car was about a half mile north of the present site of the Union Station.⁸ In 1866 the area of the box car was a clearing. Around this area there were Negro cabins. At the north end of the clearing there was a spring which furnished water for drinking, washing or clothes, and bathing.

Atlanta owed its existence and development to the railroads. Negroes and whites came to Atlanta from different parts of the state by these lines of communication.⁹ When Negroes came to Atlanta it was convenient for them settle in the neighborhood of the box car. The majority of these Negroes who came were agricultural laborers and it was easy for them to perform the duties of laborers in the railroad foundries. These foundries were near the area of the box car. Soon the settle-

⁷Cf., Gunnar Myrdal, An American Dilemma, (New York, 1944), pp. 858-866.

⁸Interview with Mr. G., Atlanta, April 26, 1951.

⁹See Gist and Halbert's sections on "Rail Transportation", and "Topography as a Transportation Break", op. cit., pp. 61-69.

ment in the box car area numbered five hundred.¹⁰

Membership. Reverend Williams and the nucleus of his followers called their box car Amity Baptist Church. In time their organization was increased by the joining of artisans, house servants, and agricultural laborers who had migrated to Atlanta.¹¹

The members of Amity arranged themselves on three levels. The artisan was on the top level, the house servant on the middle level, and the agricultural laborer on the lower level. These levels or statuses had a historical background or a base in the system of slavery. In the slave system the artisan was a man of importance. He was valuable to his master and himself.¹² The artisan took pride in himself "because he was a man with a trade". The artisan held himself aloof from the agricultural laborer. In the stage of "unrest and differentiation from the parent body stage" the house servant had dissociated himself from the agricultural laborer. In the stage of "formal organization" the status of the laborer was the lowest of the three statuses.

E. C. Hughes has pointed out:¹³

¹⁰Amity Church Bulletin, op. cit., p. 8.

¹¹Interview with Mr. G.

¹²Cf., Gunnar Myrdal, op. cit., pp. 280-284.

¹³E. C. Hughes, "Institutions", New Outline of The Principles of Sociology, ed. Alfred McClung Lee. (New York, 1946) p. 256.

Ours is a society of few fixed categories of status. The person finds his place in the social structure. He has many choices, subject to his own capacities and opportunities, to such limitations of status as do exist, and finally, to the social structure itself. Institutions play a great part in the process of social differentiation which the person cannot escape.

In time the deacons and trustees of Amity were elected from the most successful of the artisans. The house servants or domestic servants and the laborers served on church committees which were needed from time to time.

However, these three groups had the religious belief that "God was the father of all mankind, and everyone was equal in the eyes of God; regardless of the kind of work he did and the money he had".¹⁴ This religious belief led to cooperation between the three groups. From time to time a laborer moved vertically upward to become a member of the deacon board. Nevertheless, the artisans on the deacon board held the greatest influence in making church policy; they were subordinate only to the minister.¹⁵ The control of the deacon board by the artisans in the future led to a conflict situation and leav-

¹⁴Interview with Mr. G.

¹⁵Interview with Mr. C., Atlanta, April 15, 1951. Mr. C said, "Of course there were people who were members of the church who did not have a trade. These people outnumbered the artisans. But the artisans were men in Amity, they worked hard, earned a lot of money, provided for their families, sent their children to the best schools in Atlanta. Because the artisan had this kind of strong character, he contributed money to Amity. He was active in Amity. Although he was outnumbered by the other members, he was an officer in the church organizations, the deacon board, and the trustee board. The only person the artisan had to cooperate with was the pastor."

ing of some of the members of Amity.

Role of Robert Williams. Reverend Williams was the leader. He fulfilled the office of the ministry as defined by the set of rights and duties during this stage. Reverend Williams was present during the last decade of the First Baptist Church before the church was destroyed during the seige of Atlanta. Williams had learned the rights and duties of the office of the Baptist ministry.

About the functionary and the office that he fulfills, E. C. Hughes says:¹⁶

An office is personal in that the fulfilling of it requires the conscious identification of one's personal role with the historic office. The office is a part of his experience. Deep emotions may be associated with it. The role of an institutional office consists of rights and duties vested in a person, but capable of being transferred to another person in some accepted way.

Reverend Williams was a part of the master-slave society. He brought this master-slave relationship with him to Amity. He was a part of the society he use to belong to, and that society was still a part of him.¹⁷ Williams treated the members of the laboring group as subordinate. Anyone whose conduct he felt was not in keeping with the discipline of the church, he dismissed wherever he met them. He sometimes took a similar

¹⁶E. C. Hughes, op. cit., p. 259.

¹⁷Ibid.

attitude towards anyone who did not render to him a personal service.¹⁸

Williams punished by expulsion from the church the members he discovered living in the same house who were not related. The majority of the houses, in this settlement in the second year of Amity, was no more than one and two room cabins. Anytime a man and woman were found sleeping in the same room, and they were not related, they were accused of adultery.¹⁹ To the laborers of his church, Williams was a disciplinarian, as well as to the members of the artisan group. He was in the words of an old brick mason of Amity:²⁰

A man who got along with Negroes, the Mayor, and the white men at the City Hall. Reverend Williams will always visit his members on his pony, bringing with him the "Word of God". He was a man with common sense who knew how to get along with Negroes and whites. To me a man with common sense is better than a man with books.

Establishment of School in the Box Car. As the Union Armies penetrated farther into the South, the representatives of missionary societies and churches sent funds and teachers to aid in the problems of adjusting the Negro to new conditions of freedom. The majority of these men and women were inspired by a high idealism and faith in human freedom and

¹⁸ Amity Church Bulletin, op. cit., p. 22

¹⁹ Ibid.

²⁰ Interview with Mr. G.

equality.²¹

Edmund Asa Ware, a graduate of Yale University came South with educational movements at this time, and he with another professor started a school in Amity's box car church. Artisans, domestic servants, and the laborers sent their children to this school. The box car, therefore, served two functions, education and religion.²²

The next year an elementary school was organized in the settlement. This school was sponsored like the one in the box car, by missionaries from the North. This elementary school drew the primary and elementary pupils from the box car school.²³

In October, 1867 the school in the box car became Atlanta University. A board of trustees was organized and a charter was granted by the city of Atlanta. The same year Atlanta University moved from the box car, and was located at the west end of West Mitchell Street. In 1869 the institution had four brick buildings.²⁴

From the box car settlement the artisans and domestic servants sent their children to Atlanta University. The children of the laborers continued to attend the school in the settlement.

²¹E. Franklin Frazier, The Negro in The United States (New York, 1949), p. 420.

²²Amity Church Bulletin (Atlanta, 1942), p. 3

²³Amity Church Bulletin (Atlanta, 1945), p. 5

²⁴Interview with Mr. G.

Territorial Mobility. It has been pointed out in Chapter II that the domestic servants had desired to assimilate the way of life of their masters. The artisans, on the other hand, were more concerned with the material wealth of their masters.

As soon as they were able, economically, the artisans migrated from the box car settlement. The artisans desired to own their own land and homes. They bought lots on Markham Street near Haynes Street, and between 1867 and 1870, they built homes on the lots they had purchased. Their homes were surrounded by woods and swamps. Nevertheless, the homes were their own, and this ownership enhanced them in the eyes of the other members of Amity, therefore, adding to their prestige and status.²⁵

These artisans who had moved to the Markham and Haynes area were nearer to Atlanta University. Their children did not have far to walk as they did formerly in the box car settlement.

Relocation of Amity. The railroads brought more Negroes to Atlanta. They located in the settlement where Amity was situated. These Negroes were disorganized. The old style of life they use to know as slaves was gone. Some turned to religion to alleviate their frustrations.²⁶

Revivals were held by Robert Williams, and the newly arrivals to the settlement were converted, and became members of

²⁵Interview with Mr. C.

²⁶Cf., E. Franklin Frazier, op. cit., p. 347.

Amity. Robert Williams preached from the doors of the box car, and the members would sit on the ground; as Amity grew out of the box car. In 1869, the artisans and the domestic servants decided to build a church in keeping with their taste and prestige.

The Formal Organization and Independence of Amity emerged almost imperceptibly into the third stage of the natural history of this urban institution - the stage of Expansion and Relocation. The following chapter will discuss the characteristics of this stage.

CHAPTER IV

Expansion and Relocation, 1870-1872

Expansion and Relocation is the third stage in the natural history of Amity Baptist Church. This stage is characterized by:

(1) The relation of the Negro and white "races" after the Civil War in Atlanta, (2) the emergence of the Negro community, (3) the location of Amity Baptist Church in this community, (4) the role of Robert Williams as the leader of the membership of Amity, (5) the social structure of Amity, (6) conflict between members of Amity and the leaving of members, (7) and the growth of Amity in membership.

Race Relations. 1870 and 1872 were the years in Atlanta when Negro legislators were seated in the capitol of Georgia. They were also the years in Atlanta when the whites were not willing to accord to the Negro the status of a free man. Some whites, however, accepted the verdict of the Civil War and were disposed to accomodate themselves to the new situation. Nevertheless, the tension between the races in Atlanta, as well as other southern cities, was high. The Negro was granted the right to vote, and high civil and military officials in the Confederacy were excluded from participation in the election of officials.¹

The mass of ex-slaves who came to Atlanta and other southern cities had been kept in ignorance about the outcome of the Civil War with the Emancipation of Negroes. They were

¹See E. Franklin Frazier, Chapter VII "Reconstruction; Period of Acute Race Conflict". The Negro in The United States (New York, 1949)

misled by scheming politicians in the use of the ballot.

Emergence of Negro Community. The artisans who had left the settlement and moved to the Markham and Haynes area had invaded a white area. (See Figure 2) This area was sparsely settled by whites. Whites lived south of Markham on Haynes Street, and they lived north of Mitchell on Haynes. Chestnut Street was undeveloped although the western side of the street was partially settled by white people. Some of the artisans were building on Beckwith Street in 1871.²

Location of Amity Baptist Church. Decision of Its Members. Mr. James Tate³ was the first Negro to open and teach a school for Negroes in the city. He was the owner of a wholesale and retail grocery business. Tate was a member of the deacon board of Amity. He urged the artisans to build the new Amity on the westside of Atlanta. Reverend Williams pointed out that it was fitting and proper that Amity should build on the westside and become "an institution which would contribute to the moral elevation" of that side of Atlanta. They chose Markham and Haynes Street as the site for their new church. In 1870 Amity was completed. It was a wooden box-like structure that was built by the free labor of its artisan members.⁴

²Interview with Mr. G., Atlanta, April 16, 1951.

³Ibid.

⁴Ibid.

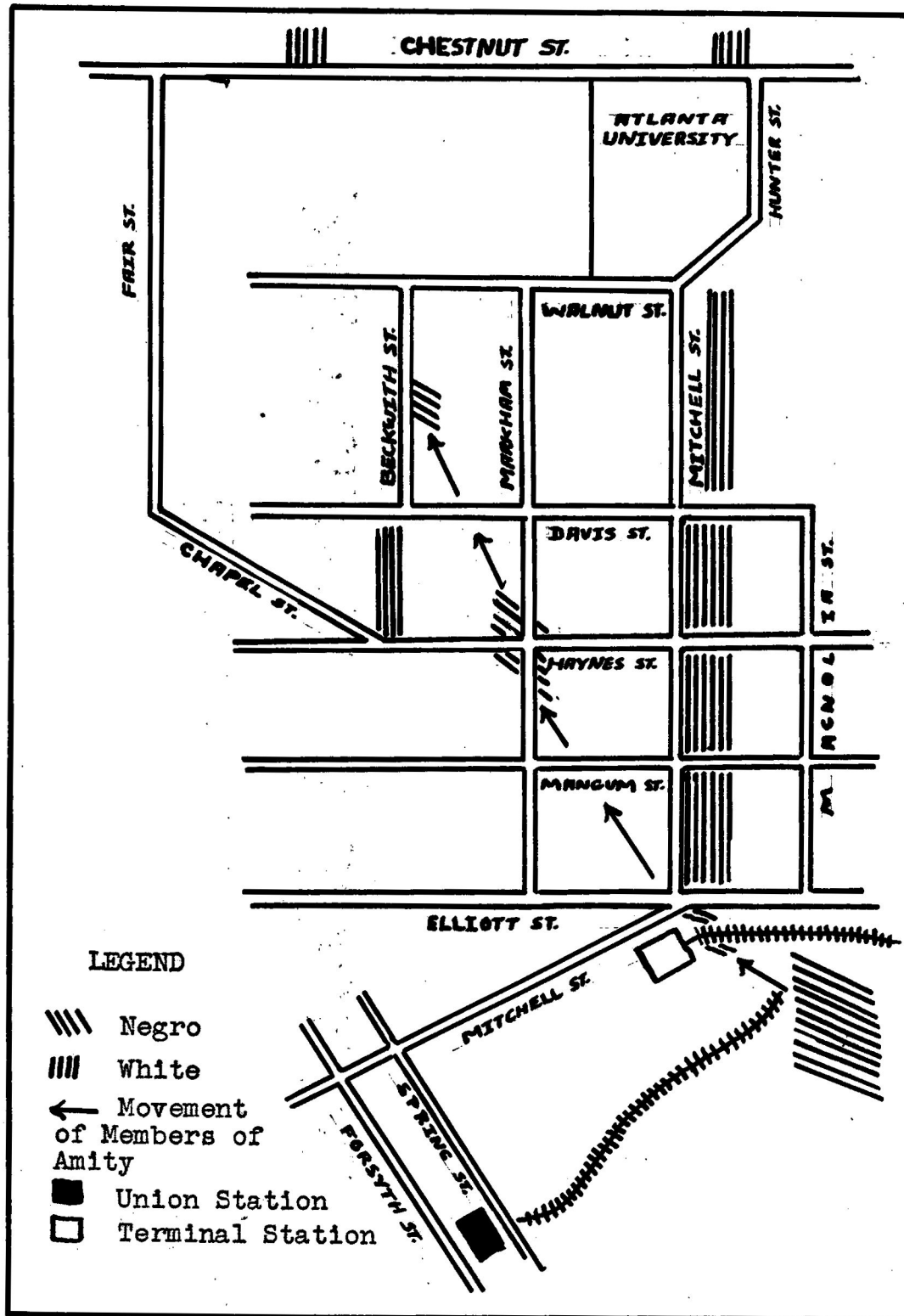


Figure 2. Emergence of Negro Community: Haynes and Markham Streets.

Amity had a gabled roof and a bell tower. In the interior of the church there were two rows of benches. On the first benches of each row the choir sat. Beyond these benches there was the raised rostrum with the pastor's seat directly behind the desk.⁵

Role of Robert Williams. During this period Reverend Williams attracted members and Amity grew rapidly. Williams grew more aggressive in his pulpit. There was no longer a white minister or person to judge him critically. In the pulpit he was excitable. "He moved the people to accept the Spirit", an old member of Amity, recalling the days when the church was on the corner of Markham and Haynes. Williams criticized the race situation in broad terms. He promised his members of a better land in the next world. His sermons of the other world were escape mechanisms for some of his members.⁶

The following was one of Robert Williams' sermons:

Though the frowns of opposers be wild and frantic, and their voices lifted up in reproaches and imprecations upon your heads like hail-stone, forked lightnings and thunder-bolts, hold up the motto, "The children of Georgia for Christ". Take fresh courage-after the storm a calm. Moses, on one occasion being encouraged by Jehovah, burst forth to a panic-stricken and salamitous army, "Fear not: stand still and see the salvation of the Lord". Like you, no doubt, he was abused; yet he had his eye fixed on mysterious clouds

⁵Amity Church Bulletin (Atlanta, 1932), p. 9.

⁶James Cooke, Our Pulpit Illustrated (Atlanta, 1898), p. 179.

which guided the army of Israel. We have not that cloud, but the abiding presence of God, the emancipator of all nations, the potentate and bishop of our souls. His presence is in the dark clouds. It was night when the Hebrews came to the Red Sea and day when they had all crossed. All night were they in the deep, while the pillar of fiery clouds gave light to Israel and darkness to Pharaoh. From the blackest cloud may shine forth the brightest day. Mark this. When God comes to take away our sins it is dark with us; but when he leaves, it is day.

This mighty God who delivered the Hebrews from Egyptian bondage will also deliver us from the bondage of superstition, ignorance and sin. God's people are led by him, and he will see that no danger befalls them. Impediments may arise here and there, but don't stop--keep moving close ranks. Let the foundation be carefully laid and others will build thereon. That we may do good and lasting work, we should put aside malice, prejudice and pretention. Forget the past and press to the front. Should one be unable to fight, let him keep time; this will encourage those who are fighting. Again, remember there were two hosts in the Red Sea, and the cloud which moved between them was light for one army and darkness for the other. There are two opposing forces on earth, sin and grace. O God, the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, help us to conquer sin, that grace may more freely abound and reign throughout Georgia and wherever man lives.

He kept in close contact with his members. He expelled those from the church who were promiscuous in their sexual relationships. From time to time when his members ran afoul of the law, Williams would go down to the jail and have them released in his custody.⁷ Williams kept his members informed about whom to vote for in elections in this period.⁸

Membership. Mr. C., an old church clerk of Amity, who is eighty-eight years old, says:⁹

⁷Interview with Mr. C., Atlanta, April 29, 1951.

⁸Ibid.

⁹Interview with Mrs. W., Atlanta, April 10, 1951.

When the church was located at Markham and Haynes Streets, there were artisans who made up the membership of the church. There were blacksmiths, stonemasons, plumbers, moulders in foundries, painters, carpenters, and shoemakers. There were butlers, maids, and cooks. They came in the church through the revivals. They liked the shouting. But you see the people who paid the dues and had the most say in the church politics were the artisans.

The investigator asked Mr. C., this question: Why did the artisans have the most say? Mr. C. replied:

The artisan was a family man. Of all the Negro men in the church the artisan was the first to look out for his family. These other men were right out of slavery, they could not accept the responsibility of being the head of a family. The woman was always the head of their families.

The writer asked this question: Were there only artisans, butlers, and maids members of Amity at this time? Mr. C. answered:

No. There were other members. There were a few white professors of Atlanta University. The President of Atlanta University who taught me Greek, was a member. There was a white yankee sergeant who stayed after the Civil War in Atlanta. He was the Sunday School Superintendant.

The above was the membership of Amity Baptist Church during the third stage of its development. Interviews with other members of Amity substantiated the statements of this church clerk.

The members differentiated themselves as follows: The artisans had the highest status. They earned the highest wages, and their children went to Atlanta University. The domestic servants ranked second. Their children attended Atlanta University. The laborer occupied the lowest status. His children

attended the school back in the settlement.

Religious behavior was expressionistic. There was a revival meeting every two months. The artisans and domestic servants were marginal participants in this behavior. But the laborers were the most expressionistic.¹⁰

Conflict Situation. In the preceding paragraphs we have seen that the members had arranged themselves in groups. Covert conflict existed between the groups, and it was inevitable that it would develop into overt conflict.

Each week the members of Amity Baptist Church held a church conference, at which time the policy of the church was formulated.

This overt conflict sprung out of the claims of the unskilled workers who contended that they were not represented adequately on the deacon board. They argued that they did not have any power in developing the policies of Amity.¹¹

Williams made it known to both groups as an old member relates it "that he (Williams) was the shepherd of the flock, and being the shepherd he knew what was best for the flock."¹² The dissenters were quelled. However there was one man who felt that the issue could not be settled, and he felt that he was called to preach. He left the church with his family and thirty-

¹⁰Ibid.

¹¹Interview with Mr. G., Atlanta, April 25, 1951

¹²Ibid.

seven members. They organized another church in the north-east section of Atlanta.

During this period there was a second breaking off of members. These members with a minister amicably left Amity to organize another church in another growing Negro community in southwest Atlanta. This community was Pittsburgh.¹³

Growth of Amity. In spite of the breaking away of its members and other minor conflict situations, Amity Baptist Church grew in its wooden structure. The church drew its members from its old box-car location, and the Negroes who migrated to Atlanta. This was the period in Atlanta, as well as in other southern cities, when the Negro was converted to Christianity.¹⁴

Frazier has said that one reason for this mass conversion of Negroes after the Civil War was the merging of the "invisible institution" of the Negro church which had taken root among the Negroes, especially on the plantations this institution became visible, and merged with the independent Baptist and Methodist Negro organizations.¹⁵

It was evident during the closing months of 1872 that Amity needed a larger physical plant.

Having traced the (1) emergence of Amity Baptist Church,

¹³ Amity Church Bulletin (Atlanta, 1942), p. 5.

¹⁴ Cf., E. Franklin Frazier, op. cit., p. 343.

¹⁵ Ibid.

(2) the emergence of social distinctions among its membership, (3) the emergence of a Negro institution of higher learning, (4) and the emergence of a Negro community which sprung up in the neighborhood of Amity, the stages of "formal organization" and "expansion and relocation" maybe compared to what Dawson and Gettys call the "popular stage".¹⁶

The role of Robert Williams as agitator flowed into the roles of prophet and reformer. In these stages there was no need for Robert Williams to agitate for a free place of worship for the followers. But in these stages he was possessed with the knowledge that "he had led his people out of bondage". This was new life for the emancipated slaves, and Williams having been a freeman for a decade before the Emancipation felt he knew what was best for his members. He was compelled by the white-Negro relations existing after the Civil War to give his members a "new" way of life. His sermons of "another world" crystallized the hopes and wishes of his members of lowly status. Most important, Williams' pulpit was his very own. He did not preach on Sundays to be judged by a white person. There was no white person there to determine what was best for his members to hear. Nevertheless, Williams only attacked the caste system in general terms.¹⁷

¹⁶Dawson and Gettys, An Introduction to Sociology (rev. ed.: New York, 1948) pp. 695-704.

¹⁷Gunnar Myrdal, An American Dilemma (New York, 1944), pp. 860-862. (Also see excerpt of sermon, this chapter, pp. 37-38.)

Usually the prophet and the reformer function in different periods and are different individuals, but there are some instances where the prophet and reformer roles are combined in one individual. Williams played both of these roles; he, also, played the role of accommodative leadership.¹⁸

Williams attempted to reform the members of his church by exulsion when the women and men did not conform to traditional moral standards in their relationships as described in the Books of The Old Testament.

Although being a leader of the prophet-reformer type Williams did not take in consideration that it was more than biological drives which were causing men and women to sleep in one room. But the factors of poverty and poor housing were also to be considered. Nevertheless, he led his attacks on what he considered as being adultery.

These stages were ones of collective excitement. This period witnessed a wave of Negroes being converted to Christianity. The "invisible institution" of the Negro Church came out of seclusion and swelled the membership of Negro churches.

Religious fervor swept the members of Amity, they saw visions, prayed, and shouted. Besides the religious fervor there were other processes at work in Amity. There were the (1) beginning of a school in Amity which later developed into a university, (2) the desires of the artisans for material things,

¹⁸Ibid. See Chapter 34, "Accommodating Leadership."

(3) and the differentiation of the members into groups.

Old forms of behavior were being broken down, and new forms of behavior were being acquired. Although the three separate groups were moving at random toward different goals there was developing among them esprit de corps. Each member of Amity had what he wished for; an independent place of worship and a leader of his own "race" who had risen above them. Robert Williams was the shepherd and the members were the flock. It was the role of the flock to obey the commands of the shepherd. The symbol "shepherd-flock" rallied the Negro to support Amity.

According to Dawson and Gettys, conflict is a characteristic of the popular stage.¹⁹ Conflict appeared in the expansion and relocation stage of Amity, when the unskilled workers claimed that they were not adequately represented on the deacon board and the feeling of the individual believed that he was "called to preach". This individual and the members who sided with him withdrew from Amity.

¹⁹Ibid., pp. 708-710.

CHAPTER V

Balance and Adjustment Stage, 1872-1899

The Balance and Adjustment Stage is the third stage in the natural history of Amity Baptist Church as an urban institution. This chapter is concerned with this stage which is characterized by:

(1) The racial conflict following Reconstruction, and the new types of accommodation between the "races" which grew out of the conflict, (2) the discriminations against the Negro, and the Negro's reaction to acts of subordination, (3) the physical setting and characteristics of the new location of Amity, (4) the invasion of white neighborhood by the members of Amity, (5) two functionaries, Robert Williams and James Cooke, (6) and the emergence of Negro institutions of higher learning for Negro women and men which developed and grew with Amity.

Racial Conflict. The period between 1880 and 1900 may well be characterized as a "reign of terror" for the Negro in southern cities; efforts were made to frighten the Negro into submission. There were numerous discriminations against the Negro. In southern cities, Negroes were kept from mingling with whites by legislation which provided for "separate but equal" facilities in theaters, shows, and public places of all kinds. They were accorded "equal but separate" educational facilities according to law, but in actual practice equality of facilities did not exist in the South. With the readjustment of the social and economic order during reconstruction, the whites placed various legal restrictions upon the activities of the Negroes, and in many cases they attempted to force on the Negro his traditional status of servitude. Many con-

flicting disturbances resulted from lack of intelligence on the part of the law enforcement organization through out the southeast during this period, in which the Negro was pointed out as being the chief cause. This statement cannot be justified because the whites at this particular crisis subjected the Negro to every form of illegal discrimination that would be forced on a minority group. When the Negro failed to bow to this form of affected subordination, he was considered as violating the laws of the land. Because of this intensity of racial conflict, legal segregation in all residential and public places was recommended.

Out of this situation of racial conflict a reorganized Negro life gradually came into being. Economically, the "races" were mutually dependent upon each other. The white upon the Negro for labor, and the Negro upon the white for the opportunity to work for a living.

In almost every other aspect of living the races were separated, either by voluntary withdrawal or compulsory exclusion.¹

Negro Reaction to Acts of Subordination. The Negro in Atlanta responded to the injustices of this period in Atlanta by making organized efforts for their own social improvement. They stressed religion; next to religion and the church in importance was the secret societies and lodges. The secret societies and lodges emerged in Atlanta, where the free Negroes

¹Interview with Mrs. D., Atlanta, March 22, 1951.

faced the hazards of securing a livelihood in a highly competitive environment. They had to face the insecurity of living in the city without the support of families and neighbors which they had in the rural environment. The fraternal organizations offered economic relief in times of sickness and provided a decent burial. These organizations appealed to Negroes because through them they acquired status, and by the symbols of the insignia and the military uniforms they were lifted above the amorphous masses.²

But the fraternal organizations had little value to the artisans of Amity Baptist Church. The artisans placed value on the education of their children, and the improvement of socioeconomic status. This value on education by the artisan was an important factor in the institutional structure of Amity, because it facilitated the rise of the professional in Amity.

Physical Setting and Characteristics. It was mentioned in the last chapter that Amity needed a larger physical plant. Amity moved to Mitchell and Haynes Streets. The new structure was completed between 1872 and 1875. The basement was completed in 1873, the year the new church edifice was occupied. The superstructure was completed in 1875.

The new plant of Amity Baptist Church was built of brick. It had a seating capacity of 2000. Stained glass windows were installed. A small gallery was built above the main floor for

²Church Conference Minutes of Amity Baptist Church, May, 1930.

the choir. Gas lights were installed.

At this location Amity was in a white neighborhood. Whites lived on Mitchell Street from the Terminal Station, west on Mitchell to Tatnall Streets which was the beginning of Atlanta University's campus. Whites lived on the streets which came off Mitchell Street.

Invasion. It was mentioned above that the artisan left the box car settlement because he desired to increase his social prestige by moving to the Markham and Haynes area. Because of the artisan higher social and economic status than the majority of his ethnic group, the artisan's presence gave the locality a certain prestige.³ The presence of the artisan attracted other Negroes from the box car settlement who were slightly lower in status, but who nevertheless aspired to associate with the more successful members of his "race".

But as the Negroes moved out of the box car settlement more Negroes invaded the settlement. The Markham and Haynes area as well as the box car settlement expanded. Population pressure was built up in the areas. Negroes moved from the Markham and Haynes area to Mitchell Street as fast as the whites withdrew westward along Mitchell beyond the campus of Atlanta University on Hunter Street. Negroes from the box car settlement invaded the white area near the Terminal Station. By 1891 Mitchell Street from the Terminal Station to Atlanta University was a

³Church Conference Minutes of Amity Baptist Church, May, 1936.

Negro community.⁴

The original population of whites were displaced. But the process involved more than mere displacement of whites, it involved also the social reorganization of the area. The receding whites took with them their culture patterns, leaving behind only their physical properties-like houses, stores, churches, and etc. The whites sold their homes and their church, Mt. Vernon, on Mangum Street to some of the individuals of the invading population.⁵

Functionary: Robert Williams. Robert Williams continued to attract members to Amity. A retired doctor, a member of Amity who is 84 years old, says:⁶

The members of Amity attended church services every Sunday. Others who were not members came to hear the sermons of Reverend Williams. The church would be full. Ministers these days preach from a prepared manuscript. Robert Williams did not need a manuscript. He had a carrying voice. You could hear him on the outside of the church. The members of Amity respected Robert Williams

Robert Williams carried over into this stage the master-slave relationship attitude toward the members.

By using the rights and privileges attached to his office, he forced his opinions on the deacon board. He made the policy for the church. The members accepted his opinions because his decisions were the "Will of God". "God wills it" was the con-

⁵Church Conference Minutes of Amity Baptist Church, July, 1938.

⁶Interview with Mr. R., Morehouse College, Atlanta, March 1, 1951.

clusion of his arguments. Faith in God and faith in the minister became a part of the "mind set" of the membership.⁷

An example of Williams' dogmatism is shown when the church moved from Markham and Haynes and the members wanted to raze the old building, so that the lumber could be sold. Mr. C. who is 88 years old and who was church clerk at this time, says:⁸

We moved from Markham and Haynes. The old church was built of wood. The members wanted to sell the material, but Reverend Williams wouldn't let the members sell the material. He called a meeting. I can remember the meeting well. He stood on the rostrum. He was a big man, and he had a cape on that made him appear larger. And he said, "God was good enough to bring us out of Israel; God was good enough to bring us out of slavery, and to take some of the oppressions off us. I see no reason why we should not be the instruments of God, and give our old church to the education of the children of our race. God will it that we do so".

The old clerk of Amity said no one questioned Robert Williams. So the old church of Amity was given to the city as an elementary school for Negro children.

From 1872 to 1881 Robert Williams grew in prestige. During this period there were few ministers to organize Baptist Churches in Georgia. Robert Williams was called to different places to organize and "set right churches". For twelve consecutive years he was moderator of Ebenezer Baptist Association. Since 1868 he was President of the Missionary State Bap-

⁷Church Conference Minutes of Amity Baptist Church, May 1938.

⁸Ibid.

tist Convention.⁹ His successor, James Cooke, in his book said, "There is a proverb concerning him, when Robert Williams spoke the Baptists of Georgia heard!"

Functionary: James Cooke. James Cooke came to Atlanta in 1879, he went to work for a deacon of Amity who owned a shoe business. James Cooke that same year became a member of Amity.¹⁰

Before James Cooke came to Atlanta, he had learned the shoemaker's trade in Athens, Georgia where he was born a slave. He learned to read and write as a boy. He never attended school regularly. In 1874 he had earned what he thought to be enough money to enter Atlanta University. He entered Atlanta University, but soon his funds were exhausted. He returned to his trade in Athens, and worked at it until 1879. Again he returned to Atlanta.

This time James Cooke entered the Atlanta Baptist Seminary. He worked for the deacon of Amity in the early hours of the morning, attended the Seminary in the day, worked in the evening at his trade, and studied at night. Finally, he graduated from the Theological Department of Atlanta Baptist Seminary.

When ever Robert Williams left for a trip he would tell the officers that James Cooke would preach. Robert Williams would return without commenting or censoring. Amity accepted the services of James Cooke, but neither the members of the church or

⁹Amity Church Bulletin (Atlanta, 1942), p. 23.

¹⁰Interview with Mr. R., Morehouse College, Atlanta, March 1, 1951.

Williams thought of compensation.¹¹

Robert Williams died in 1881. At this time James Cooke was pastoring at Stone Mountain. However, he did not cease to serve the church at communion and church conferences.

James Cooke left the members of Amity free to choose a minister. Amity's bulletin describes what happened after the death of Robert Williams:¹²

At the funeral he was not given a place even near the rostrum and leaders of the colored ministry could take no part in the program, because of the white ministers who took complete charge. This church was distraught for a time, but soon turned itself to the task of selecting another Shepherd. Among the ministers invited to preach, the officers thought Rev. H., and Rev. D. better suited their wishes.

The Pulpit Committee appointed and recommended the above named ministers to the membership to be voted on. The church in turn rejected both of these divines. At this juncture Radford Brown arose and said, "We got a pastor. Reverend Williams left Cooke here and I motion we extend him a call to be our pastor". All except the opposing officers and their families arose as one acclaim him as such. Among those remembered as in the opposition were many. Their reason was that he was too ignorant and inexperienced.

When the officers met with James Cooke to talk over the call, he asked each one in turn to state his opinion as to his accepting it. Some said they would leave the church, others said he was not fit for a pastor. The deacon whom James Cooke use to work with said, "This man comes from others well recommended. He is a good man. I am sure he is too good to accept a call like he has been extended here". After other comments Cooke was called on for his

¹¹ Church Conference Minutes of Amity Baptist Church, December, 1944.

¹² New Hope Baptist Church Bulletin (Dallas, Texas 1941), p. 12.

statement. "We will adjourn", he said, "the time for me to answer has not yet come". After caucusing alone, the opposing deacons sought out Cooke to assure him of their support. A wife of one of the officers was unreconciled, and said that his entrance of the church would be over her dead body. On Sunday he went as before to preach, but did not see her nor her dead body. There was an overcrowded church, who sang lustily as he entered, "All hail the power of Jesus' name".

Reverend James Cooke identified himself with the office of the minister of Amity Baptist Church. He had associated with this office deep emotions. Before he had fulfilled the office without demanding compensation for his services. Although he identified himself with the office, he desired to change the character of the office.

Reverend Williams had tolerated many relics from the days of slavery, both as to the conduct of the members and the rules made necessary because of illiteracy. The tobacco habit was quite prevalent and the seats were provided with their sand-spit boxes. Without consulting anyone Reverend Cooke removed the boxes. The deacon board questioned him to the "why". Cooke replied, "It was not sanitary".¹³

Cooke asserted himself against late church conferences. The later the conferences would last at night the higher the tempers would soar. On occasions fists would fly. Seeing that he was losing control of the group he stated that conferences would adjourn at 10:00 p.m.

¹³Ibid., p. 20.

The members of Amity during the early part of this period (1872-1900) sought to dismiss from the church membership any who proved objectional to certain groups. There being so many disciplinary rules it was hard not to run afoul of some one of them. Many were brought before the church and dismissed.

James Cooke became dogmatic and authoritarian. He announced to the whole membership that no one else would be dismissed from the church. This broke up the crowded church conferences. And only those came who sought to carry on the business of the church.

In 1885 James Cooke took part in the cause of prohibition in Atlanta. For his outstanding work in Atlanta Cooke was invited to other cities and towns in the state of Georgia. He was also invited out of the state to Virginia, Massachusetts, South Carolina, and Indiana.

Because of his belief in prohibition Cooke organized at Amity the West Atlanta Women's Christian Temperance Union. The W.C.T.U. did very little during its first year except hold prayer meetings, study temperance, literature, and visit the sick in the neighborhood.¹⁴

It has been said that Cooke's "ardor never abated in his fight for prohibition. His speeches always commanded admiration and applause. There was something however about the man that went deeper than his speeches. It was his life and bear-

¹⁴E. R. Carter, The Black Side (Atlanta, 1894), p. 43.

ing. He was threatened and persecuted. This pressure did not weaken his purpose; it only served to give him strength and determination".

Members. During this period differentiation was in process among the members. This differentiation in the form of stratification was a "retention" from the days of slavery. In Amity the artisans disassociated himself from the nonskilled workers, who were members. The artisan associated with domestic workers. The choice of the artisan for the domestic servant was a social choice. But economically the artisan considered himself superior to the domestic servant. Because of his skills the artisan was able to provide for his family. He was proud of the idea that "he was a self made man". He bought a home and provided for his family, he became the head of this family. He sent his children to Atlanta University, Morehouse and Spelman.¹⁵

The domestic servant rented the houses they lived in, or the rooms. In the majority of the cases of the domestic servants, the woman was still the head of the family. The man had not learned the responsibilities that went along with the role of being a husband. Some of the children of this group also attended the three institutions, mentioned above, of higher learning.

The agricultural laborer had become the common laborer. He lived near the Terminal Station. This area by the Terminal

¹⁵ Interview with Dr. A., Atlanta, March 5, 1951.

Station was becoming rapidly a slum area. The common laborer of Amity was not accepted into the informal groups of the artisan and domestic servants. The group of common laborers because of their economic and social statuses suffered the most; this was the group that was claimed to have broken the rules of the church. This was the group whose members were expelled in large numbers from the church.¹⁶

For the first time in the history of Amity an organ was bought. Before this period musical instruments were forbidden. Expressionistic behavior continued. The artisan and domestic group did not participate as much as the laborers in this behavior.

Organization of Spelman. April, 1881 two white women missionaries, Sophia B. Packard and Harriet E. Giles, started a school for girls in the basement of Amity Baptist Church. During the summer months the missionaries visited the homes of the members of Amity soliciting them to send their girls to this school. In the beginning the school was called the Atlanta Baptist Seminary for Girls; later the name was changed to Spelman. In 1883 Spelman was moved to the old yankee barracks in the southwest section of Atlanta, at this location a boarding department was added. The daughters of the members of Amity attended Spelman. Soon Spelman was training the young women school teachers of this period.¹⁷

¹⁶Ibid.

¹⁷E. R. Carter, op. cit., pp. 28-35.

Morehouse College. Reverend Williams was the President of the Missionary Baptist Convention of Georgia from its organization in 1870 until his death in 1881. As early as 1871 the Convention had passed the following addition to its constitution: "It shall be the object of this Convention to establish a Theological Institution for the purpose of educating young men who have the ministry in view and those who are preaching the gospel, or any of our brethren's sons that sustain a good moral character; and that we go to work immediately and procure some central place in Georgia for the establishment of the same". The institute was first established in Augusta, and was named the Augusta Baptist Seminary. The Augusta Baptist Seminary moved to Atlanta, and to the basement of Amity Baptist Church. The Augusta Baptist Seminary became the Atlanta Baptist Seminary. For the first months of the year 1880 the Atlanta Baptist Seminary remained in the basement of Amity; until the Baptist Home Mission Society sent funds to the Seminary to build on West Fair Street. On West Fair the Seminary changed its name to Morehouse College.¹⁸

The sons of some of the members of Amity attended Morehouse like the daughters of some of Amity's members who attended Spelman. The sons and daughters of Amity brought their roommates and classmates to Sunday services at Amity. This attendance increased Amity's younger membership.

¹⁸ Benjamin Brawley, History of Morehouse College (Atlanta, 1917), pp. 10-20.

CHAPTER VI

Late Balance and Adjustment Stage

Chapter VI is a continuation of Chapter V. Chapter VI is the end of the Balance and Adjustment Stage. This chapter is concerned with the ending of the Balance and Adjustment Stage. The stage of Late Balance and Adjustment is characterized by:

(1) The beliefs of Atlanta Negro leaders that the masses of Negroes should be educated, and Negroes could only find economic salvation in the creation of a separate Negro economy, (2) the role of James Cooke during this period, (3) the membership of Amity, (4) the reflection of growing secularism in the religious behavior of the members of Amity, and (5) the community setting and characteristics of the location of Amity, and westward drift of Amity's membership in keeping with their acquired statuses.

Atlanta Negro Leaders. During this period in Atlanta (1900-28) the Negro met unequal treatment before the law and unequal protection from the law. The police were generally discriminating and courts severe.¹

By force and fraud the Negroes in the political set-up had been treated inhumanely. In the economic and industrial life the Negroes were exploited and their helplessness has been the greater because they have been in most cases denied membership in labor organizations.²

¹See E. Franklin Frazier, Chapter VII "Reconstruction: Period of Acute Race Conflict", The Negro in The United States (New York, 1949).

²Ibid.

In this period the Atlanta University Publications edited by W. E. B. DuBois studied the Negroes in Atlanta as well as in other parts of the United States. These publications and the conferences which were held at Atlanta University postulated the idea that the only salvation of the Negro was to turn away from service to education. Education was to be the savior of the Negro in Atlanta.³ But only Negroes in the upper tenth were able to send their children to college.

The middle and lower classes of Negroes in Atlanta turned to secret societies which were springing up in Atlanta as a panacea for the treatment which the Negroes were receiving in the social, political, and economic life of Atlanta. These societies gave the Negro better economic and social advantages. These associations sprung from a group of agitators who kept before the Negro the social injustices, and the agitators aroused individual restlessness and aggressiveness.⁴

One of the outstanding of these secret societies was the Grand United Order of Odd Fellows. The leader of this lodge was Benjamin J. Davis, Sr. This lodge had for its organ of communication the Atlanta Independent. This publication was the first successful Negro newspaper in Atlanta.⁵

³W. E. B. DuBois, "The Negro Artisan", Atlanta University Publication, VII (April 1902), 7.

⁴Billye Mae Jones, "Voluntary Association: Its Natural History, Structure, and Function" Unpublished Master's thesis, Department of Sociology, Atlanta University, 1949, p. 28.

⁵Ibid.

It was clear to the Negro leaders in Atlanta of this period that survival depended upon developing their own institutions. The economic advances which the Negro made between 1866 and 1923 were summed up as follows by Davis in an editorial in the Atlanta Independent as follows:⁶

1. Atlanta has a Negro population of 75,000 people.
2. Educational and religious life of the group of Atlanta is taken care of in 100 progressive churches and schools.
3. The economic contribution of these people to the wealth and property of the city is conservatively stated at \$25,000,000.
4. We have five standard colleges, teaching higher education which do not cost the state of Georgia or the city of Atlanta one mill.
5. We have three high schools, two theological seminaries, and one business college supported by charity.
6. We have three old line legal reserve life insurance companies, whose combined capital and surplus is more than \$10,000,000. Insurance in force \$75,000,000.
7. We have one bank, capital and surplus \$500,000-resources, \$1,000,000.
8. One hundred more or less, merchants, restaurants, barber shops, and other enterprises, furnishing employment to hundreds and increasing the buying power of 75,000 Negroes in the city.

Also, in Atlanta during this period the Negro leaders were developing an esprit de corps. This "Atlanta consciousness"

⁶"Let's Look at The Record", Atlanta Independent, May 20, 1906, p.4.

was expressed in an editorial of the Atlanta Independent;⁷

The fact that the Independent repudiates DuBois movement and the peculiar notions of the Massachusetts mulatto is a good sign that the Negro leaders in the South are taking in wisdom and learning the truth that industry, integrity, and decency of living is the best policy their race can adopt.

Ordinarily we would not pay any more attention to the professor than we would pay to any other alien but inasmuch as he is a sturdy candidate for race leadership; we feel the lime-light should be turned on what he stands for in the community. In Atlanta, Mr. DuBois is not identified with any church, society or any movement operated by Negro men and women.

Leader. During this period when Davis and DuBois were contending about race relations and race leadership. Reverend James Cooke supported Davis. Davis was a member of Amity.

Although Cooke supported Davis, Cooke agreed with DuBois on education as being the salvation of the Negro. James Cooke had this to say about education for the Negro:⁸

Brethern, education is the way to overcome our difficulties. Send your children to school. Give them all the learning you can. To this end you must practice self denial. Send them to college, and make them lawyers and doctors. Come out of the barber shops, the eating houses, and the kitchens, and get into the professions; and thus you'll command respect of the whites.

We speak of the operation of education. Education to draw out, mark you, and you cannot get out until you are educated, for that is the essential operation of your deliverance. I have neither time nor inclination to discuss which is better for the

⁷ Ibid.

⁸ James Cooke, Our Pulpit Illustrated. (Atlanta, 1898), pp. 82-85

race, education or wealth, but would urge with increased emphasis that we educate at the hazard of all things. Anything that the prosecution of education consumes will be ultimately restored with interest; diminish your food, both in quality and quantity, for education; sell your garments for books-yea, enslave yourself for knowledge, for 'tis your social, political and religious life and its safeguards. This acquisition is of such absolute importance that without it no height of attainment in all other requisitions will qualify us for the citizenship in this grand republic, or consorts of the wise and worthy. No accumulation of wealth nor official distinction can be substituted for true learning. Away with your smattering of knowledge in gathering up scientific and theoretical bubbles upon the sea of knowledge. Dive into the depth of the fountain of wisdom and knowledge, for the best and purest is at the bottom.

As we ascend the scale of true knowledge, we are approaching the summit of all that is grand and essential, both in the human and divine demands. 'Tis a necessary preparation for proper citizenship here and that also in the eternal world of felicity. There has ever been and ever will be a premium on true wisdom and a lamented discount and detestation on ignorance. Eliminate ignorance and its curse from a race, then all that is true, great and gracious will crown it with garlands and blessings. The only hope, therefore, of keeping a race hewing wood and drawing water is to keep it in ignorance.

James Cooke grew in stature. The deacon board, the "power organization" of the church gave Cooke the power to handle all of the money of Amity. There was a financial committee, but the committee was not functional. The deacon board gave him the power to appoint new committees without consulting the board, and the power to ordain anyone as a deacon.⁹

In this period Cooke built Amity's old folks home from his personal funds. The members of the church named the home:

⁹Amity Church Conference, Minutes, December, 1926.

Cooke's Old Folks Home. Cooke moved his family into the building, and they occupied the third floor of the three-story building.¹⁰

Membership. Amity Baptist Church had for its members college presidents, professors, city school teachers, doctors, dentists, artisans, and unskilled workers, who came to the church from the Atlanta community.

The children of the artisans and domestic workers who were babies when their fathers and mothers had become members of Amity were now college graduates.

For clarity the professionals and the college graduates of Amity will be considered as one group-the professionals. The educational and socio-economic statuses of the professionals were different from the artisans and other members.

The professionals represented a rising group in the church. From time to time this small group of professionals came in conflict with Reverend Cooke, the artisans, and the unskilled workers.

This period marked a drift of the unskilled workers from the church. Nevertheless, there remained a formidable group to oppose the professionals who wanted a more secular church.

The closing year of this period marked the withdrawal of some of the deacons who were cooks and butlers. They had disagreed with the policies of Cooke. Cooke demanded that the

¹⁰Interview with Dr. G., Atlanta, January 24, 1951.

deacon board be reconstructed at a church conference.¹¹ Fifteen of the thirty-two deacons were not present. The absent deacons were notified of Cooke's action. Cooke replaced these deacons with members from the professional group. For the first time in the history of the church the members of the professional group had some control in the shaping of the policies.

Religious Behavior. The gaining of control, in the shaping of church policies by the professionals, was reflected in one way in the religious behavior in Amity. A seventy year old man who was a member during 1900-1928, and who now belongs to a church on the eastside of Atlanta made this statement concerning religious behavior:¹²

I don't know what happen to the people in that church (Amity). Once they use to have revivals there and prayer meetings. They, the people who use to like the revivals and prayer meetings started drifting away. I think too much education came there. People forgot about God. It was bad, but I guess times

¹¹From the minutes of December, 1926 of this church conference read:

There was much discussion about the delinquent deacons, and after a general discussion and expressions by members of the board it was seconded that the deacon board be reconstructed and that the deacons would all be notified of the action. The pastor spoke on the negligence of the officers of the church and also made mention of how slothful they are about coming to church Sunday nights. Especially, he said that he felt the officers were his armour bearers and they should love their church enough to come to it without being made to do so. We should have enough interest in God and fellowship with one another to do our duty.

¹²Interview with Dr. G., Atlanta, January 24, 1951.

change. Even the pastor around 1927 didn't seem to care too much about revivals and prayer meetings. He used to make out like he cared, but I would feel in my bones that he didn't care. When religion leaves a church you can feel it in your bones.

Community Setting and Characteristics. The members of Amity Baptist Church were still living in the neighborhood during this period. Although the city limits for the Negro population had pushed beyond the campus of Morris Brown College to Ashby and Hunter Streets.

One impetus to the expansion of the Negro population to Ashby and Hunter Streets was the fire of 1906 on the eastside of Atlanta. Many Negroes did not bother to rebuild their homes on the eastside, but bought homes on the westside. Others who were victims of the fire migrated to the North.

From 1922 to 1926 the members of Amity moved to and owned or rented their homes in the neighborhood of the church. It was possible to hear the bell of the church and to arrive in time for services. From these homes the young and old children of the members attended Sunday school and the B.Y.P.U. These were peak years of Amity. The neighborhood and Amity were compatible.¹³

There were changes in the neighborhood during this period. There was the invasion of small shops. The mule drawn public vehicles of transportation had given way to electric trolleys. The trolleys ran by Amity on Mitchell, west on Mitchell to

¹³Paul W. Miller, Atlanta (New York, 1949), pp. 22-23.

Hunter, westward on Hunter to Hunter Road. The street was paved with wooden blocks.

After 1922 the Negro population had pushed beyond Ashby and Hunter Streets. The whites had retreated farther westward. West Hunter became Hunter Road. The woods on Hunter Road were cleared away, and a Negro residential area began to develop. The same changes were occurring on Mayson and Turner and Simpson Roads.¹⁴ Also, the improvement and the extension of public transportation and the automobile were factors which encouraged the westward shift of the professionals of Amity.

¹⁴Interview with Mr. K., Atlanta, April 26, 1951.

CHAPTER VII

Beginning of Maladjustment and Rational Attempts to Meet Recurrent Crises, 1929 to 1949

The stage of Maladjustment and Rational Attempts to Meet Recurrent Crises is the last stage in the natural history of Amity Baptist Church. The early period (1929-44) of this stage is characterized by:

- (1) Conflicting groups and critical situations,
- and (2) the role of James Cooke and his death.

The late period (1944-49) of this stage is marked by:

- (3) The selection of a new minister, and (4) the membership under the new minister.

Conflict Groups. In eighty-four years, the statuses of the members of Amity changed in the following manner: In the early years of Amity the house servant had the highest status in the church. The house servant became the domestic servant. Because of the lack of educational and economic opportunities the domestic servant lost his position in the social structure to the artisan. The artisan in the formative years of the church had risen rapidly to the highest social status. They attained this status because his technical education and his economic opportunities were advantageous.

However, when the artisan of Amity was thrown into competition with the white worker in the Atlanta community, there was open social conflict. Gradually, the artisan was supplanted by white artisans where he had formerly enjoyed a monopoly.¹

¹Cf., Gunnar Myrdal, An American Dilemma, (New York, 1944), pp. 280-284.

The slow process of elimination of the artisan from a high position in the "Atlanta economic order" was reflected in the status of the artisan in Amity. The artisan lost his status when he was replaced by his children and the professionals who had received a liberal education.²

From 1929 to 1944, there were three groups opposing each other in Amity. The retired artisans formed one group, the professionals, the second group, and the unskilled workers, the third group. Accordingly, the church was torn into three factions as a result of these conflict groups. At intervals one or the other group would support James Cooke and the church. But the financial and moral support of one group for the minister and the institution was not enough, thereby presenting crucial problems.³

Critical Situations. The conflicting groups gave rise to one critical situation after another for fourteen years. Members becoming dissatisfied lagged behind in their dues from two to three years. Committees were appointed to visit them, but the appointed committees never visited the members.⁴

²Interview with Mr. G., Atlanta, January 27, 1951. During this interview Mr. G. said: You see the artisan worked with his hands, and he put his children in the "book business". His children learned out of these books, and in learning, the children knew more than their fathers. Their fathers grew old and were not able to keep up with his children.

³Interview with Mr. K., Atlanta, April 26, 1951.

⁴Ibid.

The financial secretary and treasurer were officers in name only. They did not manage the financial affairs of the church. Their bookkeeping was inadequate.⁵ They did not make reports to business meetings. They were called before the church body, and reprimanded by James Cooke, and placed on probation.

In order to meet some of the current expenses of the church a note was made on the church property which amounted to \$4,000.⁶ The second floor of the old folks home was rented as a hospital. Reverend Cooke moved his family out of the building and placed the old people who were members of the

⁵These are the comments of the auditors when they examined the books of the financial officers of Amity: In the August report there is an error of twenty cents (\$0.20) in entering the salary of Sister K. The correct amount paid her was \$18.20 instead of \$18.00. Also in this report the treasurer failed to include a payment of \$6.00 to _____, on September 13th for insurance.

In the month of October there is entered two items from Deaconess Board, Oct. 24th-\$12.00 and Oct. 13th \$10.00; we disregarded these items for the reason that they were not included in the total receipts, and also we were informed by the treasurer that they were entered in the report for information to the Church only.

Our financial records have not been kept in such a manner as to show intelligence and completeness. This is not due to the fault of the Officers making up records, but to the system that has prevailed years ago. Since our church has inaugurated a new and revised set-up in administering the finance, we feel that the records and system be revised also, that they be in keeping with our new plans. Therefore, we recommend the purchase of a four-column Cash Journal for the treasurer, in which will be entered in their respective columns, amounts received and disbursed for General Church purposes; amounts received and disbursed for fuel and other special miscellaneous items; and a Total column.

⁶Interview with Dr. A., Atlanta, May 10, 1951.

church on the third floor.⁷

For awhile the hospital stayed, but later it moved. Thus, the church lost this source of income. In order to counteract this loss, the old people who were living on the ground floor were moved to the second and third floors. The ground floor was rented in turn as a meat market, grocery store, and cafe. The cafe was operated by members of the church who contributed their time. Because of the problems arising from the administration of funds, the cafe was closed. One member accused another of misplacing the funds.⁸ As a result of the accusations of James Cooke, seventy-five members left the church.

This was the period when meetings were called to discuss what should be done about the financial situation of the church. At times there was not enough money to buy coal. The deacons loaned money to the church and some members.⁹ But this was not enough. The pastor's salary fell in arrears; he mortgaged the old folks home which he had given to the church, so that he might collect his salary.¹⁰

⁷Ibid.

⁸Ibid.

⁹Ibid.

¹⁰This statement is substantiated by a letter from the American Savings Bank which read:

Attention: Ben H. Waters

We have agreed to lend your church \$4000 on the property known as "Old Folk's Home" located on Mitchell Street. We are approving this loan with the understanding that you are to pay Dr. James Cooke's salary in full from the proceeds. You will please have the enclosed resolution properly executed at your general conference meeting. Yours truly, (Signed)

It was moved and seconded at a conference meeting that all members holding offices in any department that were three or more months in arrears could no longer hold office. Again, a committee was appointed to see after the delinquent members. They found four hundred and eighty-five members who had not contributed to the church in three years.

The sexton of the church died leaving a deformed son as a ward of the church. Before his death the church owed the sexton money. This caused a stir among the members as it is reflected in the conference minutes of June 1938:¹¹

Brother D., Chairman of the Deacon Board brought to the attention of the conference that no legal provisions had been made for the payment of the money that is due our former sexton. He stated that we were still assuming food bills and giving his son money without legal protection. It was motioned and adopted that the same committee which was appointed to look after the sexton's affairs before his death be in power to consult a lawyer, and take what legal steps that he advised to protect the church against anything that might arise. The moderator asked that all correspondence between the other son of the deceased sexton and any member of the church that pertain to the case be turned over to the pastor.

The church and the old folks home had deteriorated. Since they were built, only minor repairs were started; these repairs were never completed. The major repairs to both of these buildings were neglected.

Again James Cooke's Salary fell in arrears and he mortgaged the church. When it was discovered that he had, chaos broke

¹¹Amity Church Conference Minutes, June 25, 1927.

loose. The unskilled workers felt strongly that Cooke did it with the consent of the professional groups. The unskilled workers withdrew from the church. The professionals distrust of Cooke became deeper and deeper. But there were some marginal professionals, and older members who believed that Cooke "could do no wrong". They busied themselves to raise enough money in order to pay the mortgage on the church.¹² The following is a report during the financial difficulties:¹³

We noticed that several items of disbursements during this period appearing in the reports which is not clear. For instance, checks were issued to the chairman of the financial committee with no explanation as to the nature of the item paid. Notations should be made on each check as well as the stub of the check just what the payment is for, whether for fuel, light services or what not.

Consolidating the monthly reports the church has received from all sources, except that received by other auxiliaries handling finances in the form of rally money and missionary purposes, the sum of \$809.06. Adding the balance on hand from Jan. 1st 1936, your officers had to account for a total of \$847.43; leaving in the Bank July 1st only 91 cents. The salaries due the Pastor, Sexton, Financial Treasurer and Secretary and Organist.

Beginning of the period we owed the Pastor a balance of \$2420.00 to which if we add the six (6) months salary incurred this year amounting to \$900, makes the total amount due him \$3320.00 Of which the church has paid him this year only \$474.22; just a little more than half of what the church was supposed to have paid him this year.

The Sexton has received \$113.93 of the \$168.00 which has been incurred in the past six months; leaving a balance due him for this year \$54.07. Plus 1935 balance of \$682; a total of \$736.83.

The Financial Secretary has been paid only \$23.29 of

¹² Amity Church Bulletin (Atlanta, 1945), p. 17.

¹³ Ibid.

the \$72.00 which has been incurred this year. Leaving a balance due \$48.71, to which if we add the balance due Dec. 31st shows that the total amount due the secretary \$268.10.

The organist has been paid \$29.38 this year of \$90 incurred, leaving a balance due her on this year's salary \$60.62. Add to this the amount due Dec. 31st and it makes the total due \$194.99.

Your committee calls your attention to the fact that the church is not self sustaining, and has not been for some time. Some plan for revising the system of the dues to be collected from the members, so that the church can keep in its income.

We recommend that some action be taken to increase the revenue of the church.

As there was purchased a fire proof safe for the depositing of all the important papers and records of the church, we recommend that this safe be put in good repairs, the combination gotten, and that all such papers as mentioned above kept in the same. Right now, it would be very difficult to locate all the insurance policies and other important papers and records of the church. We also recommend that the church designate the officers to be responsible for the possession of the combination to the safe.

Respectfully submitted,

Auditing Committee

The final break came between James Cooke and the professionals months before his sixtieth anniversary. The anniversaries of the pastor of Amity were elaborate affairs. But in 1944 the professionals with some members from other groups moved and seconded that there should be "an appreciation day" instead of an anniversary. However, a white pastor of a prominent white church in Atlanta who was a friend of James Cooke sponsored the anniversary of Cooke at the city auditorium.¹⁴

¹⁴Interview with Mr. K., Atlanta, April 26, 1951.

Role of James Cooke. James Cooke in his sixty-two years of service at Amtiy saw one group after another pass into and out of power. His position was secure until the professionals saved the church during the days of the depression and took over;¹⁵ the artisan group was only able to give small contributions and moral support. James Cooke realizing that he was not able to hold sway over the group of professionals when they were invading the deacon board, he called a church conference. The purpose of this conference was to give him the power to appoint deacons every year.

One by one the organist, financial secretary, sexton, treasurer, and church clerk resigned on the contention that they were no longer able to donate their services. Not able to find anyone in the church to donate their services, Cooke finally agreed with the professionals to pay the above mentioned workers.

In 1944 James Cooke died. There were many members who desired a minister like him. There were the professionals who did not wish for the kind of administration that they had under Cooke.

September 1944, a committee was appointed to bring in names to the church and check the qualifications of the various candidates for the minister of the church. For two months there was disagreement on the names submitted. In

November a thirty day period was set. The committee had to bring in names; so that the church members would be able to elect a minister. The election of the minister occurred on December 13, 1944. The minutes of the church conference for this event read as follows:¹⁶

December 13, 1944. Purpose: To elect a Pastor. The voting for a pastor was next in order. After discussion pro and con. It was moved and seconded that we have two speakers from each group to make statements of the qualifications of candidates to be elected. After withdrawals of two candidates; this brought the number of candidates down to two. It was agreed to elect by rising vote, the majority vote would declare the election of the pastor.

The house went into election. The results:

Reverend David Noble: 177 votes

Reverend John Parson: 122 votes

Reverend David Noble was declared duly elected minister of Amity Baptist Church.

New Minister: David Noble. David Noble was a 1914 graduate of Morehouse College. David Noble's father was a graduate of Atlanta University. After graduating from Atlanta University he was (1) principal of a high school in Mississippi, (2)

¹⁶This statement is substantiated by the Committee to make Recommendations in its letter to the church which is dated January 2, 1945: Because of the world-wide fame of our deceased pastor, Reverend James Cooke, as a most profound Bible scholar and renowned preacher, Amity Baptist Church today stands out as one of the best known and most highly respected Baptist Churches in America. Because of the unique place that the church itself has had in the making of some of the greatest educational institutions for Negroes in America, Amity Baptist Church, today, is most highly respected and honored by the leading educators of the nation. In the light of this general appraisal it is obvious that Amity Baptist has an unusual heritage of which this membership should be justly proud and which we would seek to maintain with zealous care.

Regimental Chaplain during the Spanish American War, and (3) for thirty-seven years he was the minister of the New Hope Baptist Church in Dallas, Texas.¹⁷

The above description of David Noble's father was the background of David Noble. David Noble was the first minister of Amity Baptist Church who was not a "self-educated man". After graduation from Morehouse College, Noble did further work at Northwestern and Chicago Universities. His first work after graduation was a Field Secretary of the Foreign Mission Board. He later headed the African Import Company, a group which had as its objective making the African more self-sufficient. Before he came to Amity he served as minister of New Hope Baptist Church in Dallas.¹⁸

David Noble in his first months as minister of Amity used a blackboard for demonstrations at the conference meetings to make clear his plans for the church program. These plans showed in detail the working forces of the church and outlining their duties. Noble recommended that the financial part of the plans be managed by the trustees, and the deacons to work with the spiritual part of the church together with him. The money of the church from different organizations were centralized and banked under the name of Amity Baptist Church.¹⁹

¹⁷New Hope Baptist Church (Dallas, 1935), p. 12.

¹⁸Ibid.

¹⁹Amity Church Conference Minutes, March 12, 1945.

Noble recommended that repairs and renovocations be made that would be for the best interest of the church and its activities. Tenants were to be removed from the old folks home. He recommended the cancelling of the debt that the church owed the bank. He rallied the professionals to him. He persuaded them to lend the church for a year a hundred dollars or less to pay off the mortgage. The professionals responded and at one meeting \$1925 were collected.²⁰

Through the years there were no official records kept of the church's transactions.²¹ Noble recommended that official records be kept, and also that the salaries of the financial secretary, church clerk, organist, and sexton be increased. Public collections were removed as a part of the church's service by Noble. He introduced a "tithing" plan. This is officially accepted by the church and is "the ideal in giving which is held up to the full membership. Members who are not yet tithing use the pledge system until they accept tithing of their own choice. All offerings for church purposes are made in "Offering Chests' ". These chests are placed at the rear of the church.²²

Noble converted the ground floor of the old folks home into a community center, in order to offer recreational faci-

²⁰Amity Church Bulletin (Atlanta, 1945)

²¹See footnote 5.

²²This statement is substantiated by participant observation, Atlanta, November, 1950.

lities for the children in the neighborhood.

Membership. The majority of the members of Amity are professionals and business men. The older members from Cooke's administration attend church very seldom. They do not participate in the organizations of Amity.²³

In the beginning of this period Noble came into conflict with the older members who refused to agree with him on reconverting of the old folks home into a community center. But the professionals were the power group; they cooperated with Noble in his efforts with their financial assistance. This cooperation they did not give to Cooke.²⁴ Amity was seeing a new day.

But toward the close of this period the professionals desired to move the church out of the neighborhood. They desire to make a suburban institution out of Amity in keeping with their socio-economic status. This wish to move the church out of its present location has awaken old sentiments in the older members as well as in some of the younger members.

Although the wish to move Amity has been a part of their thinking for two or three years. They have not been able to cooperate in raising enough money for this purpose. Another argument for moving the church is that the church draws no members from the neighborhood.

²³Ibid.

²⁴Ibid.

The "Late balance and adjustment" and "beginning of mal-adjustment and rational attempts to meet recurrent crises" stages are similar to what Dawson and Gettys have called the "stage of formal organization".²⁶

The functionaries, Cooke and Noble, of these two stages were of the statesman types. They formulated policies and attempted to develop social policy into an art. They understood and voiced the convictions which had become established. Williams, as the agitator and prophet of earlier stages, may not have been able to make the necessary adjustment to the changing order as were Cooke and Noble. In this sense, Cooke and Noble were church statesmen.²⁷

²⁶Dawson and Gettys, An Introduction to Sociology (rev. ed.; New York, 1948), pp. 704-708.

²⁷Ibid.

CHAPTER VIII

SUMMARY

This thesis has been an attempt to show the natural history of Amity Baptist Church as an urban institution, within the framework of Dawson and Gettys for the study of the dynamics of institutions.

Institutions do not arise full-blown, commanding community attention. On the contrary institutions exhibit a temporal course of development in which different phases or stages may be distinguished. Each stage anticipates its successor in time, and each succeeding stage contains new elements which mark it off from its predecessor. An institution thus conceived becomes what E. C. Hughes calls as an institution in process; is always in a dynamic state of "becoming" that is, it passes through stages that can be conceptualized as that of a natural history: The process of Amity has been studied through the following stages:

- (1) Unrest and Differentiation from Parent Body: The "Walton" Stage, 1860 to 1866.
- (2) Formal Organization and Independence: The "Box Car Stage", 1866 to 1869..
- (3) Expansion and Relocation: The Westside Stage, 1870 to 1872.
- (4) Early Balance and Adjustment: The Second Westside Stage, 1872 to 1900.
- (5) Late Balance and Adjustment: 1901 to 1928.
- (6) Rational Attempts to meet Recurrent Crises: 1929 to 1950.

The above stages are comparable with the stages of natural

history by Dawson and Gettys. The stages of Dawson and Gettys are:

- (1) Stage of Social Unrest
- (2) Popular Stage
- (3) Stage of Formal Organization
- (4) The Institutional Stage

Unrest and Differentiation from Parent Body: The "Walton" Stage, 1860 to 1866.

The beginning of Amity Baptist Church as an urban institution was an attempt of a group of Negroes to find a definable status to enhance themselves in the Atlanta community in the pre-Emancipation period.

We have seen that the members' purpose was not one of changing the slave system or any of its component parts, but rather one of seeking, through collective endeavor, a larger measure of satisfaction of sentiments, attitudes, and values which revolved around their conception of themselves, statuses, and roles.

During the stage of Social Unrest, Dawson and Gettys say:

The evidences of social unrest which precede a social movement appear first in the restless behavior of individuals, and agitation. The restlessness tends to spread and become social; tensions increase; attention wanders and fixes itself first on one individual, object, or line of action, and then on another.

Social unrest appeared in the First Baptist Church when the house servants wished for a separate organization of their

own. Restlessness spreaded from one person to the other through social interaction. At this stage there was no organization except in the rudimentary sense. There was no discipline; it was merely a loose association of individuals whose action pattern was being established through means of their interaction.

Robert Williams the leader of this period of unrest, functioned as an agitator. The function of this agitation was very important in this stage. "Agitation operated to arouse the members of Amity", and to give direction to their impulses and ideas which made them restless.

Because of the slave situation which Robert Williams functioned in, his agitation may be described in the words of Blumer as being "calm, quiet, and dignified".

As the wishes of Robert Williams and the members of Amity became involved in interaction; the wishes took on new formulations; attention was narrowly focused on the idea of a church of their own. This focusing of the attention of the members and the leader on this specific aim, and the increasing of their state of expectancy for an institution of their own indicated that this movement was entering its second phase. This second phase was of "formal organization and independence" and "expansion and relocation".

Formal Organization and Independence: The "Box Car Stage" 1866 to 1869 and Expansion and Relocation: "The First West-side Stage", 1870 to 1872.

These stages are comparable to what Dawson and Gettys called in their natural history, "the popular stage". For them the "popular stage" is characterized by:

An objective which is nebulous and temporary, however this objective serve to focus the attention and to become for the group the representation of an object action and an outlet for its restlessness. Social movements in general are characterized at this stage by the tendency of those participating in them to formulate some ideal end which is sufficiently remote as to have more or less universal appeal.

As in every case, the conditions of the time and the requirements of the special situation determine the type of leadership. Characteristically, leadership in the popular stage is that of the prophet and reformer types.

The stages of natural history in Amity were characterized by the members of Amity to formulate ideal ends for their restlessness. These ideal ends took on the forms of social stratification and the support of institutions of higher learning. Equally, characteristic of these stages is the appearance of conflict between the three socio-economic groups of Amity. The laborers tried to counter the activities of the artisans and the domestics, who came to rationalize their positions.

The leadership of these stages was of the prophet and reformer types. Robert Williams played the roles of both types. Williams acting the role of prophet felt that he knew what was necessary as a remedy for the conflict situation in Amity. He had a feeling that he had special and separate knowledge concerning the causes of unrest and of what was necessary to remedy the situation. He spoke with confidence and authority. He was the revealer of a message, of a new philosophy of life. He used the sense of authority to make articulate the hopes and

works of the people, and to add weight and prestige to their direction. There was a feeling that he was not himself; someone else spoke through him.

As the reformer type Robert Williams attacked specific evils. Thus, he had a more clearly defined program than what he had as agitator and prophet. As a reformer, Robert Williams was determined to change conditions in conformity with conventional and traditional moral standards of an ideal type.

The next developments in the natural history of Amity were the stages of Early Balance and Adjustment, Late Balance and Adjustment, and the Beginning of Maladjustment and Rational Attempts to meet Recurrent Crises. These stages are similar to what Dawson and Gettys call in their conceptual framework of natural history-"The Stage of Formal Organization."

For Dawson and Gettys the stage of formal organization is characterized by:

The leaders of this stage who are usually of the statesman type. The agitator of the period of unrest and the prophet and the reformer of the stage of popular excitement may become the statesman of this more formal stage, but they do not commonly do so because they are unable, as a rule, to make the necessary adjustment to the changing order.

In the stages of Early Balance and Adjustment and Late Balance and Adjustment, the motives which inspired the organization of Amity had become fixed and the aim definitely established. Amity had developed a structure and was supported by a body of traditions. The leaders of these stages were Robert Williams, James Cooke, and Robert Noble; and were the statesman

type. They were the ones who formulated policies and attempted to develop social policy into an art. They gauged the forces in the current mores and perceived and evaluated their tendencies. They are the ones who undertake to understand and voice the convictions which have become established.

In the stage of Maladjustment and Rational Attempts to meet Recurrent Crises differences of opinions had to be thrashed out in discussion and deliberation. A premium is placed on more or less rational consideration of facts, arguments are advanced, criticized, and met by counter arguments. "In the give and take of argument over and critical analysis of possible lines of action with reference to the issues under examination, policies begin to take shape and programs are formulated".

Amity in its natural history has not reached the "institutional stage" as defined by Dawson and Gettys:

Under favorable conditions a movement (an institution process) may terminate in the form of a lasting organization. The successful leader in this final stage is the administrator. Every institution has its functionaries and on certain of these rest the business of direction and the responsibility of getting the organization to operate effectively with respect to policies.

In the last phase of the stage of Maladjustment and Rational Attempts to meet Recurrent Crises there is no consensus on the major policies of Amity. This lack of consensus is pointed out in the desire by some of the members to make Amity a suburban institution in keeping with their socio-economic status. This wish to move the church out of its present lo-

cation has awoken old sentiments in the older members, as well as in some of the younger members.

From this summary of the stages of the natural history of Amity, the study seems to warrant the following sociological generalization regarding the dynamics of an urban institution in process of becoming:

That Amity, as an urban church in process of development has had a natural history with perceptible stages of growth comparable to those conceptualized by Dawson and Gettys, Hughes, and other sociologists, who attempt to view the growth of institutions within a historical dynamic frame of reference.

Thus, the propositions which have guided this investigation have not only proved fruitful ones, but the data and analysis are in substantial support of these hypotheses. Accordingly this thesis can be concluded by simply restating the controlling propositions:

The first proposition was that the different physical locations of the church give important clues to the changes in the church. The second proposition was that the church has attempted to adapt itself through modification of its structure and functions, to the growth of Atlanta and the Negro community; this is reflected in its growth and changing educational and socio-economic statuses of its membership.

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